

July 2, 1959

M E M O R A N D U M

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TO: Rev. M. L. King, Jr.; Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy; Rev. Samuel W. Williams;
Rev. J. E. Lowery, and Dr. L. D. Reddick

FROM: Ella J. Baker

RE: Recent efforts in interest of Fall meeting in Columbia, and Voter-regis-
tration program.

I. S O U T H C A R O L I N A

June 18th - Palmetto State Voters League, Inc.

My visit to South Carolina in connection with the State Leadership meeting of the Palmetto State Voters League, Inc., on June 18th, was beneficial to the extent that it provided a more realistic picture than we had before of what is happening in South Carolina. The meeting, itself, was not very well attended; but there were several outstanding grass-root leaders present. Their reports of plans, problems, and achievements were revealing. I did not attempt to organize a state-wide committee from this group for our Fall meeting in Columbia, for the following reason:

The group is in the throes of fund raising, and was, I believe, so committed to its own program that little would have been accomplished in trying to interest it in the promotion of our October meeting. However, we received several indications of interest in having us visit different localities in the state, and we did get the names and addresses of several persons who can be of help. The more fruitful contact was at a state-wide meeting at Penn Center on Saturday and Sunday, June 20th, 21st.

PENN CENTER MEETING

More than 40 leaders from different sections of the state attended this workshop conference which had been called by the Adult Education Coordinating Council, under the sponsorship of the South Carolina Council on Human Relations. Present were representatives of the NAACP, Parent-Teachers Association, The Farm Women's organization, The State Federation of Women, YWCA, and local civic groups. *(Y.M.C.A.)*

I had been asked to participate in this conference by Mrs. Alice Spearman, the executive director of the South Carolina Council on Human Relations, whom I had met here in Atlanta at an Inter-agency meeting in the Spring. Through Mrs. Spearman and the contacts made at this meeting, we are in touch with the representative community leadership of South Carolina.

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We called attention to both our July Institute on Non-Violence, and the Fall meeting in Columbia, but deferred the formation of a state-wide committee until we met with Mr. Leevy, Rev. McCollom and Mrs. Spearman in Columbia on my return last Monday.

COLUMBIA FALL MEETING

1. A state-wide committee for the promotion of the September 30th, October 1st and 2nd sessions of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Columbia, has been agreed upon. The group will be called together on Monday, July 27th in Columbia.
2. Rev. Matthew McCollom and Mr. I. S. Leevy, our board members, will serve as co-chairmen of the General Committee.
3. Rev. McCollom and Mr. Leevy had already proposed a dinner or banquet, to be held Tuesday evening, September 29th. This banquet would pay tribute to South-wide leaders and maybe some local persons. (details have not been spelled out)
 - a) The dinner can be held in the Dining Room of Benedict College, which seats 300 persons.
 - b) Tickets for the dinner would sell for \$5.00
 - c) A special dinner committee will be organized, and Mr. I. P. Stanback, District manager of the North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company, has tentatively agreed to serve as chairman of the committee.
4. There is some thinking in the vein of having the dinner in a larger place to accommodate 1,000 persons. This is being explored further by Mr. Leevy and local persons, prior to our meeting on July 27th.
5. The Wednesday evening Mass Meeting will be held in the Town Hall. I understand that this hall has been rented even to the NAACP. Rev. McCollom, Mr. Leevy and Mrs. Spearman, assured us that there were no grounds for doubting that it could be used for our meeting, and as you know, Mr. Leevy has already made a deposit of \$50.00 on it. The Town Hall can seat about 3,500, they say, and is the largest auditorium in the city.
6. Headquarters for the Conference: - It is felt that facilities of Benedict College would be more adequate and centralized than those of any single church in the community. President Bacote was approached on this, and indicated that he thought it would be possible to have us meet there. There are several large churches in the city, but as you know, it is possible to have them vying for the meeting, and it is also possible that this can breed disaffection. The Rev. Mr. Bowman is particularly interested in having the Conference meet at his church. However, local advice seems to be against this. The College would have adequate meeting space, rest rooms, a cafeteria, and is just across the street from a very nice restaurant and drug store.

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6. The Interdenominational Ministers Alliance, formally voted to support the meeting in Columbia. The Rev. McCollom and I, met the group Tuesday afternoon, and presented the matter.
7. Co-Sponsorship - In order to generate real interest throughout the state in the fund raising aspects of the Columbia meeting, it seems highly desirable to follow something of the pattern that was used in the promotion of the Norfolk meeting. As you know, the NAACP and S.C.L.C. shared in the proceeds from the Norfolk Mass Meeting. Rev. McCollom has explored the possibility of having the state NAACP cooperate to make the meeting an outstanding one. If co-sponsorship is agreed upon, it would seem very wise to include the Palmetto State Voters League. ~~XX~~
~~XX~~ We believe that \$5,000.00 is possible, at least. There could be a roll call of communities at the banquet or one of the Conference sessions, and in the advance promotion, various organizations could be stimulated to make contributions, so that their area could be well reported in the roll call.

B I R M I N G H A M

A tentative Steering Committee was elected at the meeting in Birmingham, last night, June 30th. Rev. A. L. Ware presided at this meeting, and pledged his support in making contacts with ministers. However, he did not accept the chairmanship. I met with the tentative chairman and several members of the committee, after the meeting, and with the chairman this morning before leaving. This committee will meet again next Tuesday evening, and perhaps I will be able to go back. If not, the meeting next week will be well outlined, and will chart the extent to which the entire county was represented at the June 30th meeting, and to make plans for a much larger one at a later date. At this time, written proposals will be presented and passed upon. It has been agreed, however, that a concentrated drive will be held in the Fall, and that the efforts of existing voter-registration groups, and other interested organizations, will be coordinated. The tentative chairman is Mr. MELVIN JOHNSON, a young executive with Mr. Gadson's Insurance company. Apparently, he has had experience in voter-registration efforts before, and recognizes the need for coordinated activities.

M O N T G O M E R Y

A city-wide voter-registration drive is now in process of organization. Two periods of concentration have been proposed, July through October 17th, and from the second Monday in November through January 31st. The kickoff meeting will be Monday evening, July 13th. In addition to a meeting of the administrative committee of the Montgomery Improvement Association, a special meeting was held with ministers; one with about 200 precinct or block workers, and another with about 25 representatives of clubs and organizations. The general plan was endorsed at all three meetings, and a larger meeting of organizational representatives has been called for next week, July 7th and 8th.